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Washington merry-go-round

Jack Anderson

WITH LES WHITTEN

WASHINGTON — Philip Agee, who wrote the latest quit-and-tell book about the Central Intelligence Agency, has complained that the CIA constantly watches his movements.

We can confirm his complaint; we can also report what the CIA has found out about him.

Sources with access to the surveillance reports say that Agee was observed meeting with Cuban intelligence agents in Paris during the 1971-72 period and that he has made four trips to Havana.

This is significant, say our sources, because Agee spent 10 years as a CIA field officer in Latin America. He worked against the Cuban DRI which, by formal agreement, is the intelligence arm for the Soviet KGB in most Latin American countries.

By his own admission, Agee helped foment a diplomatic break between Cuban and Ecuador, supervised operations against Cuban diplomats in Uruguay and helped minitor Soviet-Cuban contacts in South America.

No one with this background could visit Cuba, our sources contend, unless he has made a deal with DRI. He would have had to satisfy the Soviet-Cuban spy apparatus that he not only was divulging full information about his past CIA activities but that he was not a double agent seeking to ingratiate himself with the opposition, our sources say.

Agee has said he turned against the CIA because it was "promoting fascism around the world." As a CIA operative, he felt he was partly responsible for the brutal torfures that various Latin American police practiced on their political prisoners.

This caused him to break with the CIA and become an ardent socialist, he has said. He has now settled in Cornwall, England, where he completed his book exposing the CIA. Our sources acknowledge that the book, which describes his life in the CIA and names his former CIA colleagues, is substantially accurate.

Because of his CIA training, Agee has developed into a skilled spy who is difficult, say our sources, to keep under surveillance.

We reached Agee in Toronto where he is promoting his book. He confirmed that he usually has managed to give the CIA the slip. Their street surveillance, he said, was "sloppy."

Once in Paris, an attractive woman named Leslie Donegan loaned him a bugged typewriter, he said. It contained an electronic device which the CIA could monitor. This enabled agents to locate him after he had dodged them. But Agee said he spotted the monitors.

He confirmed that the CIA had intensified its surveillance in Paris during the 1971-72 period. He added that he is still watched. As recently as last Christmas, he said, he was followed from England to Spain.

Once he came up behind one of his pursuers and caught him changing license plates, which Agee said was an old CIA trick. He was followed, he said, by a "funeral procession" of three cars. He finally shook them after they tailed him more than 100 miles from San Sebastian to the small town of Torrelavega, he said.

Agee refused comment on the report that he had been seen in Paris with Cuban agents. He suggested that the CIA was using us to try to fish information from him. He acknowledged that he had made four trips to Havana, but he refused to go into any details about the trips. Again, he explained that he didn't want to provide information that might help the CIA. Our informants, who incidentally are not official CIA sources, say that Agee usually traveled to Havana by way of Madrid.

WASHINGTON WHIRL: Although the Internal Revenue Service discovered former President Nixon's $148,000 tax debt in 1969 too late to enforce collection, Nixon promised to pay anyway. According to the IRS, Nixon did not pay as promised. Ironically, if he had, he probably would come under an obscure IRS ruling that permits such late, voluntary taxpayers to get refunds of the entire amount . . . Sen. Frank Church, D-Idaho, who will head the Senate investigation into CIA abuses, is listed in "Who's Who in the CIA." This is a directory of CIA agents, published in Germany under Communist auspices. The truth is that Church, as a young World War II lieutenant, served with Army intelligence in Kunming, China. He was a specialist on the Japanese order of battle. At no time, however, has he ever had any connection with the CIA . . . Former Sen. Marlow Cook, R-Ky., will open a Washington office for a Kansas City law firm which represents the Tobacco Institute. Until his quarters are ready, he is using the office facilities of his client. Last fall, Cook denied our charge that he was the tobacco lobby's man on Capitol Hill . . .

Rep. Gary Myers, R-Pa., a steel foreman who spent only $40,000 on his election campaign, has hired an accounting firm to publish audits of his office expenses, campaign costs and personal expenses. He plans to make the audits public...Poland has virtually no golf courses, but it is a top world producer of golf carts. The U.S. Customs Service is now probing reports that Poland is dumping golf carts in America at way below market price...The National Association of Home Builders has moved into a beautiful new building, but an errant builder forgot to build in a mailbox. The mistake has now been corrected...The Library of Congress is circularizing academic and other circles in quest of replacements for items stolen in 1972 from its Justice Felix Frankfurter collection. We acted as an intermediary for the return of much of the cache by the scholar-thief who took them. But many items were not sent back and the library hopes those who copied them in the past may help to fill in the gaps.